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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused January 1-2 news coverage on the New Year Eve's celebration in Taiwan and around the world; on Chinese President Hu Jintao's delivering of the "Six Points" of China's Taiwan policy; and on a court ruling on the embezzlement scandal involving the Rebar Asia Pacific Group, the highest-figure financial crime in Taiwan's history.

¶2. Most editorials and commentaries addressed Hu's "Six Points" toward Taiwan. All local newspapers expressed their great concern about Hu's call to open political dialogue and urged the Ma Ying-jeou administration to deal carefully with Hu's request. An editorial and a news analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" both cast their doubts on the "Six Points," alleging that Hu and Taiwan's Ma Ying-jeou administration were collaborating to achieve the goal of Taiwan's ultimate unification with China. An editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" commented on Hu's talks as a show of goodwill. The editorial said, however, that China's insistence on sticking to the 'one-China' principle would ultimately generate anxiety for China in its dealing with the Taiwan issue. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said that cross-Straits negotiations must still be based on economic and trade issues first. Another op-ed written in the "United Daily News" said Hu's talks, which will form China's Taiwan policy for now through the end of Hu's and Ma's terms in 2012, had actually set a timeline necessitating that cross-Straits political and military dialogue be conducted within the next three years. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" editorial said Hu had made direct responses to Ma. As a result, the editorial urged the Ma administration to get ready for more thorny cross-Straits negotiations in the near future. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" expressed optimism about cross-Straits relations but said a peace accord is a long shot compared with the more urgent issue of Taiwan's bid for observer status in the World Health Assembly (WHA). An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" responded to Hu's talks, saying that Taiwan's future must be decided by the Taiwan people. End summary.

A) "Hu and Ma Separated by Sea but Singing Together; the Taiwan People Should Notice that They Might Be Conquered"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (1/1):

"... China's united front harps on the same string without new ideas. [Chinese President] Hu Jintao's discussion [on December 31, 2008 regarding his Taiwan policy] still lacked anything which could appeal to people of Taiwan. However, ever since [Taiwan's President] Ma Ying-jeou led the Blue camp back to power [since May 20, 2008], [the Ma Administration] has only been incompetent in governance and known only how to tilt one-sidedly toward China. What [the Ma administration] expected everyday was for China to 'show leniency' and 'give leniency.' Hu's 'Six Points' on Taiwan policy were just what Ma hoped for, which will definitely expedite Ma's walk along the roadmap of ultimate unification [with China]. ..."

B) "China's Taiwan Plot; the KMT Is Willing to Be the Pawn"

Reporter Peng Hsien-chun wrote a news analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (1/1):

"... The so-called 'peaceful development' in [Chinese President] Hu Jintao's 'Six Points' is actually a euphemism for 'unification with the motherland.' Hu's so-called 'positive change' in the Taiwan situation undoubtedly meant the KMT's return to power. China will easily carry out its plot for Taiwan. The KMT obviously was only a tool and a pawn of China. ..."

C) "The Softness and Hardness in Hu Jintao's Talks"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (1/1):

"... What was worth noticing was that [Chinese President] Hu Jintao regarded the of-yet unrealized unification between both sides of the Taiwan Strait not as 'the split in territory and sovereignty,' but rather the 'political confrontation' left by the civil war, which did not change the fact that the mainland and Taiwan belonged to one China. This manner of speaking displayed only minor differences with [Taiwan President] Ma Ying-jeou's views on cross-Strait relations and was sort of an echo and support to Ma. Even more important was that because [the current situation across the Taiwan Strait] was not the split of sovereignty and territory, cross-Strait issues were not a cause to invoke China's 'Anti-Secession Law.' As a result, it would be unnecessary to use force [against Taiwan] according to the law. Such a manner of speaking was for the ears of internal figures in China, especially the hawks in the People's Liberation Army. It was believed that such a statement will make

the Ma administration, which has eagerly pushed a cross-Strait peace agreement, feel encouraged.

"In terms of the contents, Hu made positive responses to the diplomatic truce, international participation, economic cooperation and the military mutual confidence building mechanism which Ma was most concerned about. [This level of response] was never been seen in the past years. It showed that China had chosen to support Ma's policy and tried to give Ma a chance to be elected for a second term. However, because [China] stuck the 'one-China' principle [in the Six Points], the schedule [that China has in mind] will be significantly impeded. China is likely to become apprehensive [for the following reason]. Ma could not accept China's one-China principle because of [Taiwan's] internal misgivings. [Under such circumstance,] neither side of the Taiwan Strait could achieve significant breakthroughs in every aspect, which will not help Ma win a second term in 2012. However, if China yields to Ma too much, once the DPP returns to power after Ma leaves office, China will lose too much. It is believed that China must be extremely anxious about its decision. Hu's loosening of policy [toward Taiwan] while still grasping on to the one-China principle is a manifestation of such anxiety. ..."

D) "CECA: Cross-Strait Relations Should Develop Based on the Main Shaft of Economy and Trade"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (1/2):

"... Taipei should express its welcome to [Chinese President] Hu Jintao's 'Six Points.' However, with many incentives [among Hu's 'Six Points'], Taiwan did not have much room for naive and wishful thinking. The most moderate method was to start from the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), over which both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] have the least disagreement, and build economic cooperation comprehensively across the Taiwan Strait. After the mode of interaction between both sides takes shape gradually, based on the main axle of economy and trade, [the development of] cross-Strait relations could gradually expand to the domains of foreign affairs and military. Only if CECA connects Taiwan with the Asia-Pacific region or with ASEAN, or only if Taiwan participates in the activities of the World Health Organization (WHO) under appropriate arrangements can the Taiwan people believe that 'the military and security mutual confidence measures' are more

than just a piece of paper. [Hu's] so-called 'respect for the Taiwan-centric consciousness' will be [regarded by the Taiwan people as] as more than just positive rhetoric. ..."

E) "The Time of All-Dimensional Negotiations between both Sides of the Taiwan Strait Has Come"

Alexander Huang, an assistant professor at the Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies at Tamkang University, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (1/1):

"... President Ma Ying-jeou's calls for diplomatic truce and mutual confidence building between militaries finally received a response from Chinese President Hu Jintao yesterday. [Hu's response] will not only catalyze negotiations between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) this year, but also set the negotiations on political and military issues, which are more challenging, on a timeline [for action] within the next three years. [Hu's response] prompted both sides of the Taiwan Strait to expedite preparations to negotiate on issues concerning sovereignty. ..."

F) "The Ma Ying-jeou Administration Must Respond to Hu Jintao's 'Six Points' with Caution"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 220,000] editorialized (1/1):

"... It was expected that [now] cross-Strait relations will enter into a year with of so-called rigorous tests. After all, all non-political issues, including the launching of direct links, tourism, investment, finance, and education, etc., have been resolved in the last year. The next issues will be the ones most complicated and hard to resolve, such as the definition of cross-Strait relations and international participation....Hu's 'Six Points' were the equivalent of making a preliminary announcement. The opposition DPP must be prepared in combat-readiness. [We expect] that the Ma administration must respond to [Hu's 'Six Points'] with the most cautious attitude."

G) "Springtime in Cross-Strait Ties"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (1/2):

"... There is more to [Chinese President] Hu [Jintao]'s olive branch. He called for cross-strait negotiations on ending hostilities and concluding a peace agreement. Peace and prosperity are the be-all, end-all for the economic and political development of both sides. The mainland's 'peaceful rise' to the forefront of the world's powers would not have been possible without peace and stability. For Taiwan, its future is irrevocably intertwined with the mainland, its largest market and lifeline of its export-driven economy. A cross-strait peace accord is important, though it is a long shot compared to the WHA issue. ..."

H) "Taiwan's People Must Respond to Hu's Cant"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (1/2):

"... We do approve of the affirmation by the Office of the President that 'Taiwan is a pluralistic and democratic society and the people have different viewpoints on Taiwan's future path' and that 'we must respect different political advocations and political statements.'"

"But this response is far from sufficient."

"A democratically elected government of the 23 million Taiwan people must not merely acknowledge that the existence of the right of free speech but should have resolutely and clearly upheld the democratic principle, which Ma himself vowed to honor, that only Taiwan's 23 million people have the right to decide our future and should have rejected Hu's racist and anti-democratic presumptions that the Taiwan people 'belong to the Chinese race - nation' and that Taiwan 'belongs to 'one China.' ..."

